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FM AIT TAIPEI

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RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001011

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BANGKOK FOR USAID/OFDA REGIONAL ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2018

TAGS: ECON AEMR CASC PREL PGOV SENV XE TW

SUBJECT: MORAKOT SITREP 7: RELIEF EFFORTS MAKING HEADWAY AS
FOREIGN AID RAMPS UP

REF: TAIPEI 1005 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AIT Acting Director Robert S. Wang for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The death toll from Typhoon Morakot has risen slightly, but is likely to more than double at some point in the near future as more than 400 missing persons are unaccounted for in areas buried by mudslides. Rescue and evacuation efforts are largely complete and restoration of water, electricity and telephone service is progressing. However, road restoration has not made significant progress and access to remote villages remains essentially blocked. U.S.-supplied helicopters were only able to transport two small loads today due to limited lift capability and poor weather. Foreign relief assistance continues to arrive, and a USAID senior official will be in Taiwan August 19-24 to continue assessment of the on-going relief work. End Summary

DEATH TOLL NOT YET FINAL

¶2. (SBU) As of August 19, the Taiwan Central Emergency Operation Center reported the following numbers: 136 dead, 386 missing, 45 injuries. The missing are likely to be added to the death count at some point in the near future, although the Kaohsiung Emergency Operation Center has not yet confirmed the deaths of the villagers of Xiaolin and Xin Kai which were buried in mudslides. A total of 24,281 people have been evacuated. There are 51 shelters housing a total of 5,849 displaced persons.

¶3. (SBU) The estimated total value of agricultural losses now stands at NTD13.4 billion (USD420 million), according to the Council of Agriculture. This figure is up from the NTD12.3 billion announced yesterday. Of the total agricultural losses, damage to crops accounts for NTD4.3 billion (USD135 million), livestock lost represents NTD1.44 billion (USD45 million) and devastation of aquaculture totals NTD4.13 billion (USD130 million).

RELIEF AND RESTORATION WORK CONTINUES

¶4. (SBU) Two townships in the southernmost county of Pingtung are still flooded. Local emergency rescue authorities are attempting to get about 50 water pumps of varying capacity to Jiatong and Linbian townships to relieve the flooding.

¶5. (SBU) Infrastructure restoration continues to improve. There are approximately 11,600 households without potable water supply, which is a significant reduction from the 21,600 households that were afflicted as of yesterday. About 11,900 households still have no electricity, compared to 12,500 without power yesterday. There are approximately 2,100 households without land line telephone service.

¶6. (SBU) U.S.-supplied helicopters continued to ferry equipment, in particular earth moving equipment for road clearing, into afflicted areas. The U.S. helicopters conducted 8 flights on August 18, according to Taiwan officials. Today, however, they could only airlift two small excavators before flight operations were terminated due to poor weather conditions. Thus, road restoration has not made much progress since yesterday. There are 45 highways that require repair, and approximately 37 smaller roads remain impassable.

¶7. (SBU) Taiwan authorities announced that a total of 2,449 helicopter flights have airlifted supplies and food and water to affected areas, while evacuating more than 9,000 victims and transporting 1,600 relief workers.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE RAMPS UP

TAIPEI 00001011 002 OF 002

¶8. (SBU) At a meeting convened late in the day on August 18 by the European Economic and Trade Office, representatives from the U.S., E.U., Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore reviewed the donations and other assistance provided to date or planned for the near future. The E.U. and Japan both have teams of experts on Taiwan. Both teams are scheduled to travel to the south of the island today and to begin assessing relief efforts and requirements. The E.U. is transporting water purification chemicals to Taiwan, along with an expert who can provide training in the proper use of the chemicals. The expert's arrival is expected on Friday. The E.U. is also determining whether it can supply disinfectant chemicals.

¶9. (SBU) The representative from Interchange Association (Japan) said that his country has pledged USD600,000 in disaster relief funds which are in the pipeline. He said the Taiwan authorities have told Japan that additional monetary contributions are not required. Australia has delivered 200,000 water purification tablets and 100 portable disinfectant sprayers. Singapore has sent food and medical supplies, which were delivered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on August 13. The Department of Health has designated Kaohsiung Veterans' Hospital as the disseminating agency. New Zealand is still studying Taiwan's request for assistance. The E.U. representative office here has offered to continue to coordinate information sharing among foreign donor governments.

¶10. (SBU) The PRC Taiwan Affairs Office announced that Mi-26 heavy lift helicopters are available to assist Taiwan, should they be requested. In response, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) spokesman stated the Taiwan Central Emergency Operation Center would need to determine whether or not Taiwan needed the PRC helicopters. Separately, 100 pre-fabricated houses were shipped from the PRC to Kaohsiung yesterday and then transported to Jiatong township in Pingtung county. However, the head of the township announced that he was unwilling to accept the houses because of concerns that the pre-fabricated houses could contain excessive levels of chemicals such as methanol.

¶11. (SBU) USAID Principal Regional Advisor for East Asia and the Pacific, Alan Dwyer, will arrive in Taipei from Bangkok this evening. Dwyer will meet with officials from the Ministry of National Defense, Department of Health, Council of Agriculture, Ministry of Transportation and Communications and Ministry of Foreign Affairs at 9:30 am on August 20. Dwyer will then travel to southern Taiwan to meet with officials coordinating relief efforts and to provide advise and assess the relief work. Dwyer will depart Taiwan on August 24.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) The main problem continues to be the inability to repair roads buried by landslides. The current two U.S.-supplied helicopters have relatively limited lift capacity which means heavy earth moving equipment remains grounded. In a call with (initiated by) PACOM Admiral Keating this morning, the Acting Director conveyed this issue to him. We are now looking into the availability of heavier-lift helicopters that might be able to transport more of the equipment needed into affected areas. Admiral Keating indicated he would consider further assistance in this regard but needed Washington's approval. At this point, that this is the most pressing need in recovery efforts. (Note: The PRC has publicly offered heavy-lift helicopters that apparently can carry some of the heavier equipment. Taiwan authorities, however, have thus far declined to accept the offer. End Note.)

WANG